

23<sup>rd</sup> August 2021

## **HMICFRS Review of Policing Domestic Abuse during the Pandemic**

This report by HMICFRS (found [here](#)) expands on the previous reports regarding policing during the pandemic looking into the area of domestic abuse. The report was thematic and though Gloucestershire Constabulary was not one of the forces inspected there were several recommendations which were relevant to it.

I am happy with the response from the Deputy Chief Constable. It is clear there was a victim focus and that this effort is still continuing particularly with the Victim code training taking place for staff members.

Chris Nelson

Gloucestershire Police and Crime Commissioner

**Gloucestershire Constabulary**

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Mr Richard Bradley  
Chief Executive  
Office Police and Crime Commissioner –  
Gloucestershire

Our Ref: JS-jms/Bradley HMICFRS Review of  
policing domestic abuse in a pandemic  
Email: [jon.stratford@gloucestershire.police.uk](mailto:jon.stratford@gloucestershire.police.uk)  
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Date: 16 August 2021

Dear Richard

**Re: HMICFRS review of policing domestic abuse during the Pandemic**

Please find below our response to the above report, aimed at assisting you to meet the requirements of Section 55(1) of the Police Act 1996.

The report was a thematic that looked at all existing data, augmented by activity with a few forces. The force was not one of those inspected.

We were pleased to note that the report highlighted our introduction of a vulnerability car, staffed by experienced and specially trained staff, who responded to (and supported) local policing teams who attended to vulnerable victims, with a focus on domestic abuse victims, which can be found on page 18.

There are three recommendations relating to the Police Service and an assessment of force activity against is outlined on the attached table.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely



**Jon Stratford**  
**Deputy Chief Constable**

Att/.



## HMICFRS review of policing domestic abuse during the Pandemic

Ref	HMICFRS	Owner	Timescale	Progress
1	<p><b>Recommendation 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We recommend that if forces continue to adopt online contact methods in respect of victims of domestic abuse, they should <b>immediately</b> introduce an effective supervision and monitoring framework. The framework should assess the suitability of such contact methods, ensuring that victim needs are at the forefront of decisions around their use and appropriate onward action is taken in all cases.</li> <li>We recommend that forces <b>immediately</b> review their use of a telephone-based initial response to any domestic abuse incidents and crimes and ensure that it is in accordance with the strict</li> </ul>	D/Supt Bean	Immediately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gloucestershire Constabulary has recently introduced (June 2021) the Single Online Home (SOH) Domestic Abuse Service. This has created an alternative, self-service, two-way communication channel into the organisation.</li> <li>The SOH provides a safe method for reporting Domestic Abuse that doesn't necessarily require an emergency response. Where an emergency response is required, victims are advised to immediately call 999.</li> <li>All SOH reports are received into the Force Control Room (FCR) which is staffed 24/7 and assessed by an FCR staff member. The reports are risk assessed utilising the THRIVE+ method in combination with the National Decision Model (NDM) to ensure the most appropriate response is actioned. The return method of contact to the reporting party is a critical aspect of this, and staff are conscious that a clumsy approach could alert the perpetrator and place the victim at greater risk. An element of theatre may be introduced by FCR staff to facilitate safe contact e.g. posing as a market researcher. A STORM incident is then created from this contact to provide a corroborating record of the report.</li> <li>All incidents created in the FCR have clear pathways for supervision with incidents assigned a grading commensurate with the risk, based on THRIVE+ and NDM assessments, and then allocated to an appropriate resource for deployment.</li> </ul>

	parameters set out by the College of Policing.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <i>How to Guide for Domestic Abuse</i> details clear guidance and supervision responsibilities with regards to responding to Domestic Abuse reports and the need to take clear, positive action to protect the victim.</li> <li>Whilst the victim may request to be contacted by telephone as part of their reporting, police officers will attend all calls and reports relating to domestic violence or abuse and check the welfare of all parties. As such the response grading is predominantly Grade 1 (Immediate), or Grade 2 (Priority). Only in exceptional circumstances should a call be graded 3 and this must be agreed by the Force Incident Manager affording appropriate oversight.</li> </ul>
2	<p><b>Recommendation 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We recommend that forces immediately review their capacity to provide ongoing support and safeguarding to victims of domestic abuse whose case is awaiting trial at court. This should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure there are sufficient resources available to maintain contact with victims to keep them up to date with the progress of their case; and</li> <li>Enable the offer of access to specialist support services as well as opportunities to</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	D/Supt Bean	Immediately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gloucestershire have a dedicated Domestic Abuse Safeguarding Team (DAST) consisting of six Constables supervised by a Detective Sergeant. These officers provide additional support to victims alongside the Office in Case (OIC) for the investigation to provide updates and engagement with partner agencies, and ensure the best possible wrap-around service for victims.</li> <li>The DAST will facilitate opportunities for victims to receive ongoing support and safeguarding, irrespective of whether they wish to pursue a criminal justice resolution.</li> <li>Where a case is charged, the Witness Care Unit (WCU) engages with the victim to assist and support them throughout the court/trial process. It is recognised that this can be an extremely confusing and intimidating journey, with a high risk of victim/witness attrition, so the WCU staff work closely with the OICs, DAST and support agencies to facilitate the process.</li> <li>The Crime Management and Investigative Standards (CMIS) team are currently running a series of Victims Code workshops, aimed at educating staff of their responsibilities such as ensuring timely</li> </ul>

	<p>address concerns victims may have regarding continuing to support a prosecution through the delays.</p>			<p>updates are provided to victims, which have been agreed and recorded as part of a contact plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gloucestershire have two commissioned services: Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS) and Victim Support who are available to help victims of Domestic Abuse and complement the work of the DAST.</li> <li>• Regular meetings are held with GDASS, and enhanced services considered to those most at risk of domestic abuse.</li> <li>• Ministry of Justice (MoJ) funding has been secured by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to increase the number of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) available to support victims of Domestic Abuse.</li> <li>• Two dedicated 'Response IDVAs' are currently being recruited to work directly with police teams. Their responsibility will be to create, maintain and improve victim engagement on behalf of the OIC. This should assist in reducing cases where the victim does not support a prosecution (Home Office outcome 16) and the attrition rates caused by delays in the Court system resulting from backlogs attributable to the COVID pandemic.</li> </ul>
3	<p><b>Recommendation 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We recommend that all forces <b>immediately</b> review their use of outcome 15, outcome 16 and evidence-led prosecutions. This is to ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Domestic abuse investigations guarantee</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	D/Supt Bean	Immediately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outcome 15 relates to investigations being discontinued due to evidential deficiencies, whilst outcome 16 relates to victims not supporting or subsequently withdrawing support for the prosecution.</li> <li>• Police utilise the services of the DAST and partners (predominantly GDASS) to maintain victim engagement and encourage the reporting and prosecution of perpetrators. Two 'Response IDVAs' are currently being recruited to support this by working alongside police to create initial rapport and support a victim through the process, from report to court.</li> </ul>

	<p>all attempts to engage victims are explored, and that all possible lines of evidence are considered so that in all cases the best possible outcomes for victims are achieved;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ There is regular and effective supervision of investigations that supports the above point to be achieved; and</li> <li>○ The use of outcomes 15 and 16 is appropriate, and the reasons for using them, including auditable evidence of victim engagement, are clearly recorded.</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence Led Prosecutions (ELP) are receiving greater emphasis and scrutiny by both police and local Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) staff, and revised guidance has been drafted and published to all officers in collaboration with CPS colleagues. ELP features as part of the Domestic Abuse training to all new recruits and will be subject of refresher training to other operational officers through a number of blended media.</li> <li>• The force already has ‘Vulnerability champions’ on each Local Policing Area (LPA), who have received enhanced Vulnerability training, and there is an aspiration to further evolve this concept into specific ‘Domestic Abuse champions’.</li> <li>• An ELP webinar was held in April 2021 hosted by CPS District Crown Prosecutor and operational lead for Domestic Abuse, Andrea Parker. This was recorded and is available to all staff via the force intranet.</li> <li>• An automated ELP prompt is currently being implemented within crime reports as a mandatory field to evidence that ELP has been considered in relevant cases and the rationale as to why/why it hasn’t been implemented.</li> <li>• Domestic Abuse cases that have been discontinued are subject to regular dip samples conducted jointly with CPS and GDASS colleagues, and chaired by the police strategic lead. Learning and best practice is then shared at the regional Domestic Abuse Best Practice Framework (DABPF) meeting with other regional police and CPS leads.</li> <li>• In addition, Police attend a regional CPS Local Scrutiny Panel meeting with a wide range of partners, where specific Domestic Abuse cases are subject to a ‘deep dive’ review with learning and best practice shared.</li> </ul>
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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As previously mentioned, the Crime Management and Investigative Standards (CMIS) team are currently running a series of Victims Code workshops, aimed at educating staff of their responsibilities such as ensuring timely updates are provided to victims, which have been agreed and recorded as part of a contact plan.</li><li>• As previously mentioned, the Crime Management and Investigative Standards (CMIS) team are currently running a series of Victims Code workshops, aimed at educating staff of their responsibilities such as ensuring timely updates are provided to victims, which have been agreed and recorded as part of a contact plan. This initiative also includes the introduction of revised subject headings for victim updates, which will provide for more accurate and consistent data for audit and quality assurance purposes.</li></ul>
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Ends.